

FAIR FOODS FIXING PUT UP TO PRESIDENT

He Is Asked Also to Enforce
Prices in Bill to Amend
Control Act.

NEW VIGOR IN CONGRESS

But While Problem Is Debated
Capital Profiters Give
Another Boost.

Special Dispatch to The Sun.

WASHINGTON, Aug. 18.—Congress and the administrative branches of the Government in Washington centered their efforts upon the cost of living fight with new vigor to-day. While the price of meats and fresh produce in Washington, under their very noses, went up a notch.

An immediate programme of Government price fixing on all necessities of life was proposed by Representative Hagen (Iowa), who has prepared amendments to the Federal food control act providing that fair prices shall be proclaimed by the President and that all persons selling in excess of the Government price be heavily punished. Mr. Hagen is chairman of the House Agriculture Committee, and he proposed that the committee would report to the House amendments with the price fixing provision.

While the committee had the amendments under consideration the House was discussing a further investigation by the Federal Trade Commission into shoes and leather. A favorable vote on the resolution for investigation is expected to-morrow.

Major Gillen of Newark, N. J., charged before the House Agriculture Committee that the "Big Five" packers controlled the New York fish market and all fishing on the Jersey coast. He was one of a delegation of fifteen New Jersey Mayors who insisted on immediate Congress action on proposed drastic legislation.

Sale of army food through the parcel post and the Governors of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut was begun to-day, but reports indicate that sales were slow through lack of availability of supplies.

Announcement was made that Attorney General Palmer would confer with the Philadelphia fair price committee to-morrow. The Attorney-General invited the conference of Governors meeting in Salt Lake City to send a committee to Washington for conference on fair price committee and other cooperative work between the State and Federal Governments.

Government to Fix All Prices.

Immediate Government price fixing of all commodities as the only effective way of stopping profiteering and reducing the cost of living is contained in amendments to the Federal food control act which Chairman Hagen intends to push through the House this week.

Mr. Hagen's amendments, which were framed after conference with Department of Justice officials, provide for the proclamation of fair prices on all necessities by the President and give the Department of Justice direct powers to prosecute any one charging in excess of the figures. Power is given to limit prices, storage charges, commissions and practices.

The license system, built up by the Food Administration during the war, will not be revived, on advice of Attorney-General Palmer. Mr. Hagen said, but instead the Department of Justice can bring immediate criminal prosecutions against the violators.

"The whole intent and purpose of the amendments is to put the entire action against the profiteers and provide immediate lower living costs, which I do not believe are possible under a reviving of the licensing system," Mr. Hagen said.

The Attorney-General is opposed to the reviving of the Food Administration license system, believing it will not produce immediate results.

Under agreement with the Department of Justice Mr. Hagen plans to exempt farmers and farm organizations selling the products they raise from the price fixing, and like the original food control act affects only dealers who do an annual business of \$100,000 or more, but Mr. Hagen is certain these exceptions will not impair the effectiveness of the new legislation.

Aims at Large Dealers.

"If we can compel the large dealers to sell commodities at fair prices," Mr. Hagen said, "and the public is informed of these prices, the little fellows cannot exact extortionate prices."

Final action on the plans will be taken by the House committee to-morrow, the chairman said, after Attorney-General Palmer or Assistant Attorney-General Ames is called before the committee for another conference.

The Hagen amendments extend the food control act no further than the Attorney-General proposed, inasmuch as they put all commodities under Government control, instead of adding wearing apparel, and food containers as Mr. Palmer suggested. The plan carries a penalty of not more than \$5,000 or imprisonment for not more than two years, or both, for anyone who violates the act. It also provides for the seizure of property of anyone who violates the act, and for the seizure of property of anyone who violates the act.

Text of the Amendments.

The President is authorized to issue regulations prescribing requirements for the sale of commodities at fair prices, and to appoint agents to be observed by any person to whom the provision of this section applies, and who is engaged in the production, manufacture, storage, mining or distribution of any commodity.

Whenever the President finds that any person is charging, commission, profit or practice, or any such thing, which is unjust, unreasonable, or discriminatory, or unfair or wasteful, he shall order such person, within a reasonable time fixed by him, to discontinue such practice, charge, commission, profit or practice.

The President may, in lieu of any such order, upon conviction thereof be

need not exceeding \$5,000 or imprisoned for not more than two years, or both, if the person shall not apply (a) to any farmer, grower, producer, packer, vineyardist, planter, ranchman, dairyman, stockman or other agriculturist, in respect to any necessary produced or raised upon land owned, leased or cultivated by him; (b) to any partnership, corporation or association whose membership is composed of such individuals, with respect to any necessary produced or raised by its members upon land owned, leased or cultivated by them; nor (c) to any retailer with respect to any necessary actually dealt in or sold by him in his retail business.

A "retailer" is defined in another section of the act as one whose sales are less than \$100,000 a year.

Jersey Mayors Demand.

Demand that Congress stop investigating and take real action to reduce the cost of living was made before the House Agriculture Committee to-day by Mayor Gillen of Newark, N. J., who submitted a programme of drastic legislation, the principal features of which were:

1. Creation of a Federal commission to regulate exports.

2. Authorizing the Government to take over or control the operations of all cold storage plants.

3. Authorizing the Government to buy all refrigerators.

4. Provision that during the present emergency the Government shall sell directly to the public, not only food, but wearing apparel.

5. Direction to the War Department to release to the public forthwith all remaining surplus supplies of food and clothing.

Charges were made during the hearing by Mayor Gillen that the "Big Five" meat packers controlled the New York fish market, which in turn gives the dealers a monopoly over all the fishing along the Jersey coast.

"A year ago," Mayor Gillen told the committee, "the municipality of Newark discovered that the dealers of that city were selling fish at a price of \$1.00 a pound, while the fish on the Jersey coast, and that the poor people of the city were unable to get the kind of fish that they were used to getting, such as herring and whitefish."

Upon further investigation he found that the New York fish market or Fulton Market, as it is sometimes known, controlled the entire catch along the Jersey coast, and that it discouraged the bringing in of these cheaper grades of fish.

"The fishermen were instructed either to throw all such fish back into the water or turn them over to fertilizer plants, despite the fact that the majority of these lower grade fish is every bit as good as the fancier kind."

So the city of Newark arranged with some fishermen to bring direct to Newark catches of the cheaper fish, and we placed them on sale direct to the public. The experiment proved an immediate success, but suddenly, about three weeks ago, the supply of the cheaper grades began mysteriously to drop off.

The men who supplied us the fish gave various excuses, such as that the abundance or had moved away from the Jersey coast, and finally the supply was cut altogether and for love or money we could get no more fish."

Mayor Gillen said that the whole fish combination in New York and found that even the State of New Jersey was powerless to effect a remedy.

Too Much Investigation.

"With all the talk and the investigations that Congress and the Government have indulged in," declared Mayor Gillen at the outset of his testimony, "the only remedy that has thus far been set up for these exorbitant living costs is the very temporary one of the War Department selling its surplus foodstuffs to the public. When this surplus is disposed of, what then? Talk and investigations amount to nothing. They don't amount to a cent of relief."

Mayor Stuyvesant of Verona blamed Samuel Gompers and organized labor for the present situation. He said:

"The Government started all this trouble by letting Sam Gompers come down to Washington and tell the United States what it must pay for its labor. We are reaping what we have sown. Twenty-five years ago when we were attempting to Americanize the people who were coming into this country as immigrants, and now you have Bolshevism in your midst."

A native American, had to wait twenty years to vote, while the riff raff from Europe was coming here and voting in some instance two years after they arrived."

Sales of army surplus by parcel post through the post offices of the country were begun to-day. Reports coming to the Post Office Department indicate, however, that the orders for food are running far ahead of the supplies made available by the army.

In Washington the distribution of lower grades of meats was stopped early in the day because only a small quantity of roast beef, beans and peas was on hand. There was not enough orders to fill the first rush of orders this morning.

In New Orleans 10,000 orders for army food were received and in other cities the orders ran into the thousands. Every State in the Union is ordering by parcel post with the exception of New York, New Jersey and Connecticut. In these three States supplies are to be distributed by the Department of War through the Governors of the States.

Complete instructions on the handling of parcel post orders have been placed in the hands of every postmaster. Appeals have come from the West, however, to the Department to ask whether ranches can be supplied because of the restriction to individuals. In every case the postmaster was permitted to use his judgment. Though ranches will hear stuff by the railroad postal officials here say it can be handled by parcel post.

Attorney-General Palmer, who is leading the Administration fight on high prices, will go to Philadelphia to-morrow from New York to confer with the Philadelphia Fair Price Committee and with Federal agents there.

Governors Are Invited.

The Attorney-General to-day approved a suggestion from Gov. Gardner of Missouri that the conference of Governors, meeting in Salt Lake City this week, send a committee to Washington to confer with officials here with a view to coordinating the work of all of the State and municipal authorities who are co-operating with the Department of Justice.

With predictions current that shoe prices will near the \$20 mark this winter, agreement was practically reached in the House to order the Federal Trade Commission to make an immediate investigation of the leather and shoe situation.

Plans are to have the investigation complete within four or five weeks so as to prevent the high prices manufacturers and other shoe interests have claimed will be necessary. The investigation will show the actual cost of producing shoes now, thus informing the people what should be a fair profit and preventing extortionate profiteering in large measure.

The proposed investigation is provided in the resolution of Representative Boyd (Mo.). A final vote on it will be taken as soon as the House meets to-morrow, and all votes on amendments to-day indicated it would pass by a large majority.

Efforts of a few members to broaden the scope of the investigation prevented a final vote to-day, Republican leader Mondell (Wyo.) being forced to ask aid from Attorney-General Palmer. King (Ill.) demanded a roll call on the amendments, which was refused. The investigation, which had been defeated 79 to 7 in a division vote. Responding to the call for all members to return to Washington to take action against the high cost of living more than 100, who have been on vacation trips, returned

to-day, but Mr. Mondell feared a quorum could not be obtained before to-morrow. Leaders of both parties insisted more could be accomplished through the investigation by continuing to shoes, instead of extending it to other commodities, thus delaying the time before price reduction action of any kind could be taken. Other necessities will be reached in other ways, it was promised.

The spirit of the House indicated that Congress was determined to take real action to reduce the cost of living. Realists believe the fault lies with the President and his departments for not having acted before, but Mr. Mondell and other Republicans declared there would be no effort on the part of the majority party to obstruct any feasible plan to bring down prices.

Country Is Hounded.

"The country is tremendously interested in bringing down the high cost of living," said Mr. Mondell, "and it is the duty of Congress to help the Government Departments in every possible way. There is no objection to securing all the information possible about the cost of production of shoes and leather. One of the most trying of the increases in the cost of living has related to shoes and other footgear. The shoe industry has increased almost all other commodities. The preliminary report of the Federal Trade Commission on the question of shoes is a masterpiece of justice for the prices, and the Government ought to get busy and punish those who are responsible unlawfully for these increases. Upon further investigation we will find out who is doing it."

Mr. Gillen explained that the report of the commission on the shoe situation submitted recently was not up to date, as it dealt with conditions previous to 1915.

"I feel sure," he said, "that prices can be brought down through Governmental publicity as to what is a fair margin of profit on commodities that Mr. Palmer came to this city to meet Mr. Williams and his coworkers, and to instruct them in campaign methods, and to expound the food control laws as they now stand and tell them of changes which may be made."

"New York is the metropolis on which the eyes of the nation are fixed," Mr. Palmer said. "I have asked the people who cooperated with the Food Administration during the war to meet this situation, which is fully as important as their work during the war."

"Fair price committees will be organized in each city to fix a local price fair to the dealer and to the public, and while they have no legal standing the prices they will fix will be the judgment of the community, which will be reflected in a jury box—and we will get them before a jury."

Gouging Not Confined to Foods.

"The food control act is still in force and the war is still on. But there is just as much profiteering in other things as in foodstuffs. If you don't believe it, go out and try to buy the clothes. If we are to go after profiteers in one line common justice requires that we go after them in all lines."

"Under the plan proposed we will put into operation the committees that did such splendid patriotic service during the war and reorganize them as fair price committees for food and other necessities."

"Any one selling above those prices is gouging."

Dollar Worth 45 Cents.

"The purchasing power of the dollar is now down to about 45 cents and the Federal Reserve notes are on the same basis as the greenbacks in the days after the civil war," he said.

This charge was vigorously denied by former Speaker Clark (Mo.) and Representative Wingo (Ark.), both Democrats.

"The paper dollar is just as good as the gold dollar in this country to-day," Mr. Clark said, "and that certainly was not the case of the civil war greenback."

"This nation and Spain are the countries that are on a gold basis," Mr. Wingo said, "and there is no better currency in the world than the Federal Reserve note. It has back of it all the assets of the Federal Reserve bank, a 40 per cent gold reserve, and the pledge of the Government to redeem them in gold."

"The Federal reserve banks have issued two billion in notes, and I am just informed that they have more gold in their vaults than all the notes issued. The unreasonableness of some people about these notes is unjustified."

Representative Sanders (La.), asserted that the "Sugar Trust" was responsible for the high sugar prices.

"The present sugar shortage is artificial," he declared, "and has been created by the American sugar trust. The price to the producer has been fixed at \$5.25 a hundred, and there is no justification for the price the people have been paying."

"On the prices of clothing last Saturday, the manufacturers could pay 60 cents a pound for their cotton and still be making profits. And there is no restriction whatever between the prices of leather and hides and the price the people must pay for shoes. When the American people see the difference between the price the producer receives and the price they must pay for articles, they will force prices down."

Large increases in clothing are imminent, Representative Siegel (N. Y.), said, because of the war and increased wages they are demanding. Restriction of immigration, he claimed, has decreased the number of tailors.

The net cost of making overcoats, he said, has increased from \$18.85 in 1917 to \$22.62 in 1919. Allowing a 30 per cent gross profit the average selling price now should be \$29.40.

BOSTON GRAND JURY PLANS SUGAR PROBE

Will Open Inquiry To-day Into Higher Prices.

BOSTON, Aug. 18.—The sugar situation will claim the attention of the Federal Grand Jury to-morrow when it convenes in special session to investigate the high cost of living. Evidence gathered by the Department of Justice agents active in the Government's food investigation will be presented at that time, according to the Boston District Attorney Boynton, who said that while other commodities would be considered later.

Whether the unusually large supplies of several foodstuffs stored in Boston warehouses are being held unlawfully has not yet been determined, according to Mr. Boynton. He added that predictions of wholesale arrests were not warranted by the evidence at hand.

Long litigation is expected over the 15,585 bags of flour seized Saturday in a South Boston warehouse, where it remains in the custody of a United States Marshal. Owners of the flour, estimated to be worth \$15,000, are preparing for a legal battle September 2, when the matter comes before a Federal Judge.

\$122,000 OF EGGS SEIZED.

U. S. Makes First Seizure in Maine Under Hoarding Law.

PORTLAND, Me., Aug. 18.—Under a law against the New England Cold Storage Company of this city and J. R. Poole Company of Boston, U. S. Marshal Marshall Wilson seized 4,571 cases of ice cream and foodstuffs from the plant to-day. The charge is hoarding to obtain an excessive profit.

This is the first seizure made in Maine under the hoarding law. The retail value of the cases at present prices is \$122,000.

PALMER SHOWS WAY TO EXPOSE GOUGERS

Fair Prices Will Be Fixed by Committee—Charges in Excess to Be Profiteering.

BIG WEAPON IN PUBLICITY

Attorney-General Says if New York Leads Movement Nation Will Follow.

A. Mitchell Palmer, Attorney-General of the United States, told the fair price committee, appointed by Arthur Williams, Federal Food Administrator for this city, at a meeting of the committee at the Hotel Biltmore last night that if it is found possible to take care of the present situation regarding high prices in Washington and New York city all the rest of the country will follow.

"If we can't get New York opinion with us," he declared, "if we can't get New York dealers to blackball the men who won't play fair then we can't do it anywhere."

It was for the purpose of getting New York interested in the plan proposed by the fair price committee to fix a fair margin of profit on commodities that Mr. Palmer came to this city to meet Mr. Williams and his coworkers, and to instruct them in campaign methods, and to expound the food control laws as they now stand and tell them of changes which may be made.

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will be profiteering and the names of profiteers will be published. I am trying to have Congress enact a law which will make profiteering a crime. As the law stands to-day hoarding is a crime and a conspiracy by two or more persons to raise prices is a crime, but action on the part of an individual in raising prices is not a crime. I hope to have some penalty attached to that as to hoarding, namely a fine of \$1,000 or two years imprisonment, and I regard the present sentence as a much more effective deterrent than a fine.

"As soon as evidence of profiteering is found it will be turned over to the Department of Justice for action, but in the meanwhile the fair price committee will use publicity as a club."

"Charges in excess of the prices set by the fair price committee will be accepted as prima facie evidence of profiteering."

Washington Not to Interfere.

"I don't want you men and women who are going to cooperate with the Government to get the idea you are to be supervised from Washington, or that the Government is to fix prices. Our idea is to decentralize the work to the local possible extent. For the present we only ask you to give and in return to be fair prices for the various commodities."

"I approach the problem with great trepidation, or I should say the President did, for this campaign against the high cost of living was begun at the White House. I was told there would be the greatest difficulty to find volunteers to carry on the work now that the war is over. Let me say that already in three-quarters of the States committees have been organized under the direction of the men who served the Food Administration during the war. In only three States have Food Administrators declined to accept, and in these county organizations are going ahead."

"I am satisfied that in two weeks we will be functioning all over the country. I hesitate to say that this campaign will reduce the cost of living, but after some hesitation I do say it."

"If prices do not go down naturally they will at least not go up, and if you can keep prices from going up they will sag. We in America must do something to stop this vicious circle of increased prices, increased wages and increased costs, resulting in another increase in prices which will bring America to industrial disaster. We must hold both sides of the circle steady."

Sugar Overcharge Admitted.

It isn't going to be easy for any food dealer, wholesaler or retailer, to gouge his customers in overcharges for sugar and expect to get away with nothing but a fattened bank account. This was demonstrated yesterday by Arthur Williams, Federal Food Administrator for this city, in the case of the first offender against the call of the city officials to place an embargo on sugar.

Williams, Federal Food Administrator for this city, in the case of the first offender against the call of the city officials to place an embargo on sugar, 232 Second avenue, 12 and 12½ cents a pound for 2,000 pounds of sugar. The bill and check in payment of the transaction were convincing. Mr. Williams didn't

minutely. He got Miller & Wirtzel on the telephone just as soon as Central would let him have the connection. The allegation was denied at first and then the firm was invited to come around and see Mr. Williams. There was a hearing, an "informal" hearing, the Food Administrator called it, and when it was all over Mr. Williams said:

"The allegation of the customer was proved to be the fact. Mr. Miller of the firm admitted the charges. He agreed to refund to the customer the overcharge, or monies paid above 14 cents, the wholesale price per pound. This amounted to about \$30. He agreed also to do the same with all other customers."

Violators Fear Publicity.

"Dealers," continued Mr. Williams, "must understand that they cannot make money by profiteering without running the risk of losing their reputation for fair dealing."

When the Federal Food Board, of which John Mitchell was chairman and Mr. Williams a member, was jacking up food administration violators during war times those who were hauled over the coals complained that the press hurt more than the publicity given by the board to their misdoings. Many admitted that it cost them thousands of dollars in loss of patronage.

But Matthew J. Matthews, Assistant United States District Attorney, said yesterday he is investigating a complaint of alleged profiteering to the effect that a sugar dealer sold a pound of sugar at 16 cents a pound. The United States Sugar Equalization Board has repeatedly declared that a fair retail price is not to exceed 14 cents a pound. Mr. Matthews declared that if the facts are as alleged criminal proceedings will be started against the dealer.

As things are shaping up it is believed there is going to be hard sledding for those who cannot get the idea through their heads that the Government agencies are in earnest in their efforts in behalf of the public in the fight against the high cost of living.

The Rev. Dr. Jonathan C. Day, Commissioner of Public Markets, and Edwin J. O'Malley, Assistant Commissioner of Markets, say that the school stores for the sale of army surplus foodstuffs will be sufficiently stocked up to begin selling direct to the people then. The department expects to have fifty or sixty stores going at first.

Many Volunteer Services.

It was announced yesterday that nearly 500 members of committees comprising sixty-seven community councils in the five boroughs are in readiness to answer the call of the city officials to assist in the work of the school stores. Volunteer workers, under the supervision of Miss Mildred Taylor, organization secretary, assisting Miss Laura A. Caudle, Deputy Commissioner of Markets, in charge of volunteer organizations, received their final instructions yesterday.

A committee of three representing the Morse Dry Dock Employees Association, which has 4,300 members, made another fruitless trip to the office of the Department of Markets yesterday. The association is anxious to get two carloads

of army surplus foodstuffs. The supplies are in a warehouse at the foot of Fifty-seventh street, Brooklyn. The Morse company's plant is one block away, at the foot of Fifty-sixth street.

The association desires to truck the stuff from the warehouse and make distribution to its members without charging a cent above the actual cost of the goods, but it cannot seem to make a deal with the warehouse, which has been unable to get an audience with a single official of the Department of Markets who can help it out.

The committee representing the workers of the dry dock concern consists of Joseph McGuirk, president; Margaret Shea, a conference member, and Homer G. Hoover, vice-president.

"I called at the office of the Department of Markets on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday of last week and again to-day," Mr. McGuirk explained, "I have been unable to see Dr. Day, Mr. O'Malley, Mr. Mulry or anybody else in authority. We have a blank check ready to be filled in with the required amount for the foodstuffs our association would like to have."

At a Loss What to Do.

"As inhabitants of the city of New York we wish to get some of the food which the city is going to sell. We received a letter from Dr. Day telling us to direct our order to Capt